

Ruthie!



The Second 50 Years.

1967 - 2017

As Commemorated By
Joan Geary

One of the last promises I made to my beautiful mother was that I would create a book about her life. She smiled with the essence of her sweetness and mother's love and knew I would keep my word.

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Cover Photo: Ruthie's 89th Birthday
(January 13, 2006)

INTRODUCTION

Ruth Geary lived her life with *Strength, Beauty & Determination*. Ruth was born in Vienna during World War I, fled Austria in 1939 & confronted World War II in her new home, America. Ruth adapted throughout her life by facing each day with a joy & strength that most would never know. While Ruth bore the pains of her losses from the war in private, she always shined a positive light upon others. The 20+ years Ruth was employed at Gump's were some of her happiest. This period also included many of her travels to countries around the world as well as a dynamic social life. A bench at The Palace of Fine Arts was dedicated to Ruth in 2011. Ruth will always be remembered as a kind, intelligent & elegant woman, believing that life, as she was, is beautiful. She passed away peacefully on September 18, 2017 at 100 years young.

“Somewhere Over The Rainbow”

San Francisco

Without forewarning, Ruthie's husband, Al, passed away suddenly on January 16th, 1967, in Northridge, California. Ruthie managed to keep the family-owned pharmacy operating until she was able to sell it. Once Joan graduated from high school in June of 1969, Ruthie sold her Porter Ranch home. She decided to move to Brentwood, where she was hired in a sales position by a luxury department store in Beverly Hills.

As wounds healed over time, Ruthie found her heart yearning for San Francisco. She and Al had spent time in the Bay Area when he was serving in the Army. Ruthie had fallen in love with the city and its cosmopolitan lifestyle, so similar to her pre-war memories of Vienna.

Ruthie followed her heart. In 1971, she resigned from her job in Beverly Hills, leased an apartment at a deluxe housing complex in the Fisherman's Wharf area and relocated to San Francisco. Joan joined her temporarily until she left to attend college in Hawaii. Susan was previously enrolled in college at another location.

Ruthie reconnected with her Viennese friend, Helli, who lived south of San Francisco in Hillsborough. Decades had passed since they had seen one another. With the help of Helli's referral, Ruthie secured a sales position in the Silver Department at Gump's San Francisco where she was employed for over 20 years. During this time, Ruthie enjoyed relationships with her co-workers as well as her customers, including many of San Francisco's prominent citizens. Her co-workers fondly referred to Ruthie as "Meine Königin" or "My Queen" (in German) and she was consistently a top producer for the business. When Gump's moved the original 19th century store on Post Street to their new location, Ruthie seized the opportunity to retire at the young age of 76 years.



Joan's June 1969 graduation from high school provided Ruthie the opportunity to pursue her dreams. Because Joan had completed her academic requirements, she was graduated six months early, in addition to the previous six month advancement she had received in primary school.

Ruthie's San Francisco apartment was located on Stockton Street at Bay in Northpoint Apartments. Although the unit was small, there was a large pool area that served as a social gathering place for the many residents to meet. This turned out to be very advantageous for Ruthie while becoming acclimated to living in San Francisco.





It wasn't long until Ruthie was comfortably settled in San Francisco. Joan had planned to stay a few months with Ruthie during 1971 and then move to the island of Oahu to join her partner Dave and attend college. Dave was stationed at Barber's Point and still had two years of service to fulfill in the Navy. Joan attended college in the islands at Leeward Community College and the University of Hawaii, and would return to San Francisco to stay with Ruthie during the summer breaks. Ruthie also visited Joan in Hawaii and as pictured, they had their usual fun while on the islands of Oahu and Maui.



Northpoint Apartments 1973 (above),
1976 (right) & early 1980's (below)



Sausalito (1978)

Marge Levitsky
1950's & 1960's
best friend from
L.A. (1974)



(1977)



Lake Tahoe (1977)



Bill Levitsky 1950's & 1960's best friend from L.A. (1983)



Pat Hotung's home (1985)



(1980's)



Bay to Breakers (May 18, 1980)



Peter & Joan's 1890 San Francisco Victorian Home (1982)

Special Friends

Simply stated, Ruthie *loved* being with other people. She enjoyed socializing with a variety of friends from all backgrounds and interests. Many of these were friendships that lasted for decades. Some flourished from their connections with Vienna. Others met through Gump's or were neighbors from Mill Valley. And Ruthie was a companion and "adopted mother" to many of Joan's friends. She amazed everyone with her elegance, beauty, knowledge of current affairs and trends in the world, and, most of all, her kindness. A few of her special relationships are listed here.

Ruthie and **Helli** were friends while living in Vienna. At that time, Ruthie and Helli's brother, Kurt, were in love with one another. Sadly, Kurt was killed in the underground while fighting the Nazis (as noted in "*Growing Up in Vienna --Ruthie! The First 50 Years.*").

When Ruthie found herself relocating to San Francisco, she contacted Helli. Helli had moved to the Bay Area decades before and married **Earl Rouda**, a prominent financial services businessman.

Helli's sister-in-law, **Migs Rouda**, was employed in the Silver Department at Gump's, the world famous luxury department store located on Post Street in San Francisco. Through her relationship with the Roudas, Ruthie was introduced to the store management and was hired in sales in the Silver Department – a very sought after position in the early 1970's.

As the years passed, Ruthie socialized with the Rouda family and rekindled her long-time friendship with Helli. The bond they formed in Vienna stayed with them until sadly, Helli and Earl passed within a relatively short time of one another. Always great philanthropists, Helli and Earl donated the Henry Moore sculpture located at the San Francisco Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall where it was dedicated in 1980. This was a beautiful legacy left to the people of San Francisco by The Roudas.



Ruthie & Helli at the Henry Moore sculpture dedication, left (September 1980) & at a friend's house, above (1981)
Helli & Grandson (below)



Ruthie, Earl & Helli relaxing at the Rouda's Hillsborough home (1975)



Lucy Spector, also born in Vienna, was a dear friend of Ruthie's for many years. Again, their Viennese bond kept them close. Lucy's business, Britex Fabrics, was another iconic retailer in San Francisco. Lucy built the business from scratch and after decades her daughter continues to oversee the operation of the store. Ruthie treasured the times she spent with Lucy, her mother, Omi, and her very dear friend Inge. She would often visit Lucy at her Hillsborough and Sonoma homes.



Ruthie's New Year's Day Party (2001)



Ruthie's 85th Birthday Party (2002)



Mother's Day (2001)

Elisabeth Solle and her husband, Charles, a Viennese couple, introduced Ruthie to Dr. Frank Back. Frank was a Viennese gentleman living in San Francisco after his family fled to Switzerland and then emigrated to America. More information about Frank is included in the Romance Section of this book. Elisabeth and Charles lived in Northpoint Apartments and were neighbors of Ruthie's.

Patricia Nelson was also a mutual friend of Frank Back's.

Ruthie and her daughters shared many pleasant times together with Pat throughout the years and continued to do so after Frank's passing. Pat introduced Joan to her very special friend, Donna Casella, and they have shared a very close relationship for many years.



Ruthie's New Year's Day Party (2003)

While Ruthie had two biological daughters, there were two other very special women in her life -- Sandy Joseph and Ty Bratton. Ty and Chuck Bratton are included in the Gump's section of this book.

When Ruthie met **Sandy Stevens**, Sandy had been a very close friend of Joan's. Joan and Sandy began working together in 1978 at Levi Strauss & Co. and became instant friends. Sandy has always shared her strong value system and is the model of a truly loyal friend. Raised in Ohio, Sandy brought mid-west integrity with her to California. From the beginning, Sandy spent most holidays with Joan and her family, as well as often socialized outside of work with Joan. During this time, Sandy married her perfect match, **Ted Joseph**.

Through the years, Sandy and Ruthie became very close. As Ruthie aged, Sandy provided a sense of security for Ruthie in their relationship. Ruthie often referred to Sandy as her third daughter and Joan as her sister. It only takes a few minutes to realize what an utterly special person Sandy is and what a special man, her husband, Ted is. It had been such a pleasure for Ruthie to have Sandy and Ted included in her holiday celebrations as well as other interests. There is always joy and love in their hearts, as well as a true appreciation of life and one's surroundings. Photos including Sandy and Ted are included throughout the various sections of this book.



Ted and Sandy Joseph, Ruthie's New Year's Party (2013)

Ruthie had a group of close friends that lived in and around Mill Valley. Natalie Morris, Noemi Laub, Franke Baxter, as well as others who have passed, including Elsa Leach, Rhea and Julian Toole and Dorothy Davidson.



Natalie Morris moved to Mill Valley after leaving South Africa. A very talented sculptor and artist, Natalie befriended Ruthie and stood by her side for years as a very dear and valued friend. There was a true bond between Natalie and Ruthie, as well as Ruthie's family. (2014)



Franke Baxter -- Always available to help Ruthie.



Noemi Laub, a neighbor at Eucalyptus Knoll, and Ruthie bonded immediately after she moved into the complex. They were like two school girls together....always watching out for one another and sharing stories of their lives. Noemi is pictured to the right with Ruthie at the Japanese Tea Garden (2011) and above with Natalie and Arthur, Joan's Briard (2013).



Always Time For Romance

As years passed, Ruthie found herself courted by several very distinguished gentlemen -- a few are included in the following pages. The same expectations for elegance and etiquette she gave herself were sought after with the men she befriended. Ruthie did not desire to remarry. Her first marriage had been difficult at times and she certainly treasured her new found independence. However, with that said, Ruthie did engage in meaningful, long-term relationships. Happy to work at Gump's and enjoy an active social life, the arts, the outdoors and more, she preferred her independence to be truly happy.

Leon Miller

Leon Miller lived on Russian Hill in San Francisco. He was introduced to Ruthie while she resided in Brentwood in Southern California, prior to moving to San Francisco. At this time, Leon and Ruthie enjoyed intermittent travel together to locations such as Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe. They continued to date after Ruthie moved to San Francisco and shared time with each other's children. In addition, to playing chess, one of Leon's favorite activities was to attend San Francisco Giant's games, enjoying his season tickets located just a few rows behind home base. This was in the days of Willie Mays Jr., Willie McCovey and Bobby Bondsa very special era in the history of Giants baseball! Leon was a model gentleman and a very kind man.



Riviera Hotel Las Vegas (November 1968)



Photos 1968-1982



Joseph Koret, founder of Koret Corporation was another beau of Ruthie's. Joseph was quite taken with the Viennese beauty. He kindly hosted a trip for Ruthie and Joan to go on a Caribbean cruise as a gift to Ruthie when he was not able to join her on the voyage. (Circa 1978)



Dr. Frank Back

What can one say about Dr. Frank Back? He was truly one of a kind! Frank held a very special place in Ruthie's heart and life.

Frank had a constant twinkle in his eyes and was always coaxing his friends to laugh. He often shared his jokes – many times, the same ones again and again! Everyone always laughed in response, as Frank was so animated while sharing the stories that he offered pure entertainment and joy to all his friends.

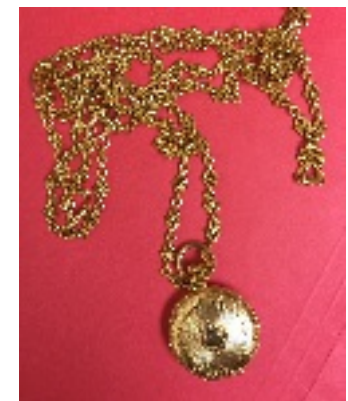
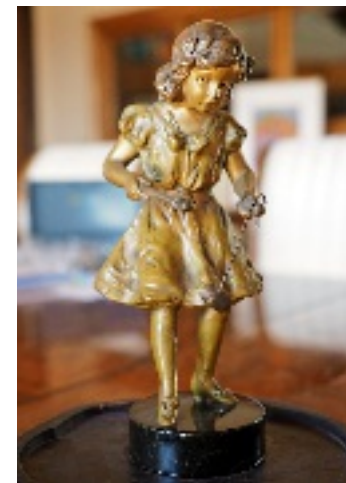
Frank, born into a Jewish family in Vienna, shared a similar history with Ruthie. Anton Back, Frank's father, worked for the Austrian government and was somehow able to escape the Nazi's with his wife and son. The Back's left Austria and emigrated directly into Switzerland. They were able to bring many belongings through the Nazi lines. Unfortunately, we do not know the details of their move other than it was more successful than average Austrian refugees and probably attributed to Anton's relationships with the Austrian government. There is also an indication found in their historical family papers that the Back family may have changed their religion to Christianity in order to escape successfully.

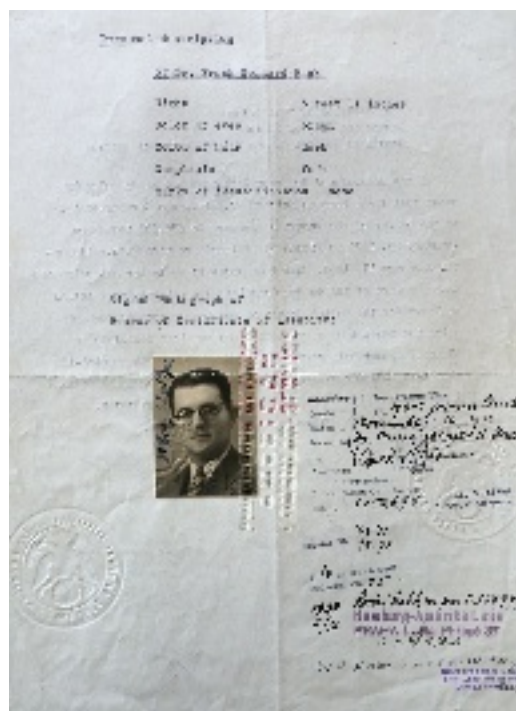


The Palace Hotel
Christmas 1971,
the year they met.

Frank was a stamp collector as a young boy. When leaving Austria, he passed through the Nazi guards carrying a shoe box with stamps, many of them quite valuable. The guards ignored them thinking they were just common stamps of no real value. As an adult, with a Doctorate Degree, Frank became a well-recognized San Francisco stamp collector and reseller. After Frank passed away, in 1991 his collection was auctioned by Christies. A photo of the auction catalogs is shown.

In addition, paintings were brought through the Nazi lines along with various jewelry items and furniture. Some of these items are shown. The pocket watch and chain belonged to Frank's father. The diamond was his mother's and was retooled into the current ring design. The bronze is an Austrian girl playing Ruthie's favorite ball game when she was a child in Vienna.





Historical Back family documents were in Joan's possession for over 25 years. Joan donated the collection to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. in the Back family's memory. They have been added to the museum's extensive database as well as stored safely for future generations. Below is a small sampling of 1938 Viennese government documents issued for Frank and his parents.

Frank and Ruthie spent many years together enjoying a variety of activities. Among these were hiking, dining out, traveling, socializing, attending fine arts events and more. Ruthie's daughters affectionately referred to him as "Uncle Frank." Frank and Ruthie affectionately called one other "Schatzee" ("Darling" in German or Polish), as well as, "Franco Bastardo" & "Witchila" (photos below). Frank & Ruthie brought much joy to each others lives and they cared for one another dearly!



Trip to Big Sur
(1972)



(1980's)
Above & Below



Palm Springs "Franco Bastardo"
(1984)



"Witchila"- Joan & Peter's Hillsborough Home (Mid-1980's)





Joan & Peter's
Foster City
Condo
(Early 1980's)



San Francisco (Date Unknown)



Rouda Wedding Reception Stanford Court (1972)
Mayor Alioto & Wife, Angelina (above)



Frank's 75th Birthday Party - The Metropolitan Club, San Francisco (October 1983)



Peter & Joan's Hillsborough Home.
Frank, Patricia Hotung and Ruth's
sister, Martha (Mid 1980's)



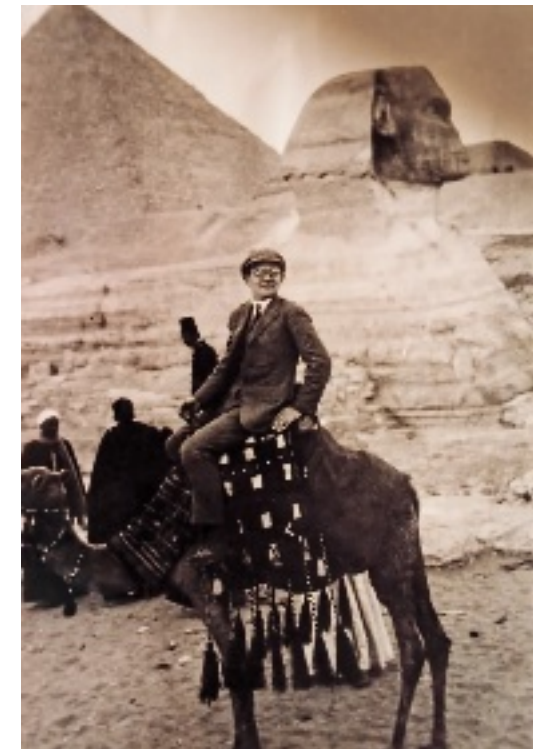


Frank travelled annually to Velden, Austria. He and Ruthie enjoyed hiking (1987) and also taking the Thalia boat in Velden am Worthersee (1989)

The Kasamas Family in Vienna --all very close to Ruthie's and Frank's hearts. (1989)



Frank loved to go for long walks & hikes. His favorite place to take a brisk walk was Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park. A memorial bench was placed at the lake in Frank's honor after he passed. One can't help but smile when thinking of Frankie! He certainly knew how to enjoy life! (Photo 1995)



Frank on a camel at the pyramids as a young man.....always grinning!

Moving To Mill Valley

In 1988, Ruthie decided to leave San Francisco and purchase a condominium in Mill Valley's brand new complex, Eucalyptus Knoll. Ruthie LOVED her condominium and was quite proud of it. Everything she had worked for was now in her own home again. Her elegant European taste and interior design skills were at their best. The move to Mill Valley was like a breath of fresh air for Ruthie. The view of Mt. Tamalpais and the marshland that passes between Eucalyptus Knoll and the mountain are all she desired. It was the peace and beauty she had longed for. The condominium also provided a venue for her to do what she loved -- socialize and entertain. Ruthie lived at Eucalyptus Knoll for nearly 30 years until she passed.



Annual flowering trees at
Eucalyptus Knoll Entrance (2015)



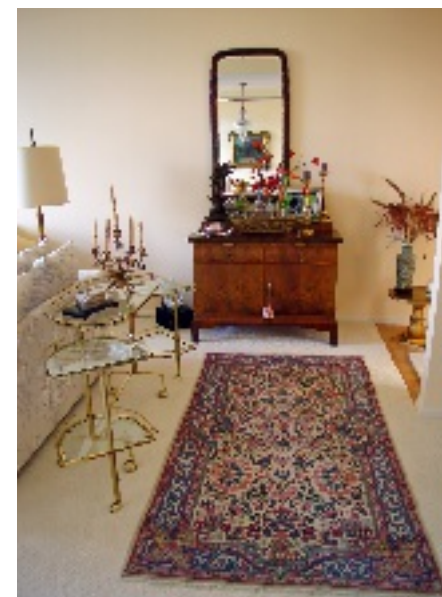
(2003)

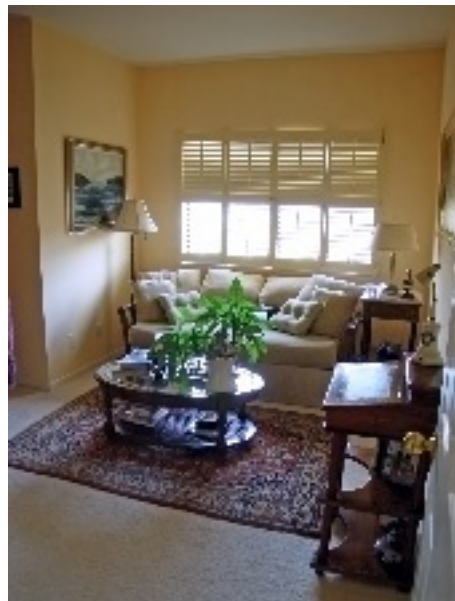


Ruthie loved growing
orchids (2010)



(2011)







New Year's Day 2014



Ruthie's Vienna Schnitzel, creamed spinach and cucumber salad dinner.



Xmas 1996

Socializing And Entertaining

Ruthie loved to socialize with a variety of people as well as entertain her friends! Spending so many years at Gump's provided access to professional interior designers and those educated in the luxury home goods markets, as well as customers that enjoyed purchasing the best products from around the world. For years Ruthie hosted an annual New Year's Day Open House at Eucalyptus Knoll, as well as celebrating holidays and other special occasions in Mill Valley or at Joan's residences. She also loved attending parties, fine arts exhibits, concerts or just going for a beautiful walk.



Enjoying the Deck at Eucalyptus Knoll 2002

75th Surprise Birthday Party (January 13, 1992)



David and Natalie Morris
Annual New Year's Day Party (2001)



Omi & Lucy
Spector





Ruthie's Surprise 85th
Birthday Party
(January 13, 2002)



Helga, Carol, Ruthie & Rose Goldman



Inge, Lucy Spector and
Rose Goldman



Inge & Sake, Lucy's Dog



Tina Whyte
(above) Peter,
Ruthie, Rhea
Toole, &
Dorothy
Davidson



Annual New Year's Day Party
(2010)



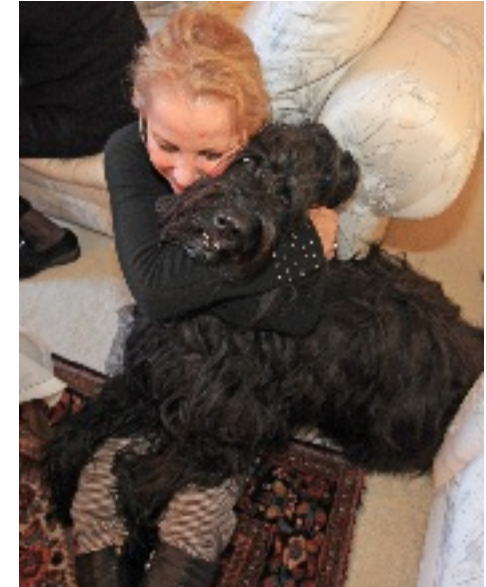
Annual New Year's Day Party (2005)
The Morris & Toole Families & Boris



Mother's Day Celebration (May 2011)



Annual New Year's Day Party
(2013)





Auberge du Soleil Mother's Day (1995)



Silvana, Ruthie & Boris - Aldebaran Sausalito (1995)



Golden Gate Park (2003)



Palace of Legion of Honor (2002)



Talking to England with
Peter's satellite phone
(December 2001)



Napping in San Rafael (2002)



Ruthie, Boris & Pat (2000)



Xmas in San Rafael with Boris & Tashie (2001)



Computing with Boris (2003)



Thanksgiving at Ian's (November 22, 2001)



De Young Museum March (2008)



Japanese Tea Gardens (April 2011)



Marina Green (September 1999)



90th Birthday, Flowers from Hank & Shirley
(January 13, 2007)





Filoli Gardens (2006)



Roberto Meghnagi Opening Day
Corinthian Yacht Club (April 2008)



Lucy Spector's Hillsborough Home (2009)



Vecchiola's Home (2010)



Tommy Toy's (March 18, 2013)



Academy of Art Car Show (June 2013)



De Young Museum Cafe
(March 28, 2013)



Linda Dalton, Ruthie & Joan
Palace of Legion of Honor (May 2014)



Chuck Galvin's Retirement Party
With Claudine Velluet (below)
(September 18, 2010)



Broderbund Reunion
Doug & Gary Carlston
Peter LaDeau
(September 25, 2010)



Claudine's Birthday, Bon Gusto
Lydia Prostedny (below right)
(December 2012)





Prelude Restaurant & Green Music Center,
Weill Hall (January 13, 2013)



Scottish Fiddlers Concert (April 2013)

Gump's of San Francisco

Ruthie began her career at Gump's at the height of its success in the early 1970's. It had been a famous icon of San Francisco for over a century. As a luxury home furnishings and décor provider, Gump's attracted clientele from around the world.

Access to the elite customers of San Francisco was also a natural fit with Ruthie's Viennese background and elegance. It helped her achieve much success in fulfilling the goals of her job, while concurrently becoming friends with many of the clientele of all backgrounds, both economic and country of origin. Ruthie's co-workers nick-named Ruthie "Meine Königin," or "My Queen," as a result of her Viennese accent, elegance and graceful demeanor with people she met.

One of Ruthie's favorite benefits from employment at Gump's was the access it provided to people from all over the world. She became friends with customers and business associates that would travel to San Francisco and she would also visit them in her travels. In addition, many of Ruthie's co-workers were also close friends through the years. A true bond existed amongst them.

Ruthie was employed at Gump's for over 22 years. She retired at the age of 76 in 1993 when the store moved its location from 290 Post Street. The traditional store was taking on a new image and merchandising campaign and it was the appropriate time to take a break from working. Sadly after over 100 years, Gump's filed for bankruptcy in 2018. It is best that Ruthie never witnessed this happening, as it would have broken her heart. She had been so very proud of contributing to the iconic brand for so many years. However, as Ruthie, the realist, would often say "Nothing is Forever."



Gump's Silver Department with Migs Rouda and Alan.



Ruth's retirement party. Shown with the store manager, Jed. (July 1993)

Ty and Chuck Bratton

Ty & Chuck Bratton were especially dear to Ruthie. Customers from the time she began working at Gump's in early 1971, they instantly became friends. The kindness and gracious gestures Ty and Chuck shared were so very special to Ruthie. She viewed Ty as an adopted daughter and confided so many of her innermost feelings to her. For many years after Ruthie retired from Gump's, Ty and Chuck continued to make the long drive from Los Altos to Mill Valley or Sonoma just to visit Ruthie.

Ty is a very advanced student of the Japanese Tea Ceremony. She has studied with experts in Japan for years. She recently sent this lovely note about a conversation she had with Ruthie ----

"Many many years after our encounter I asked Ruthie, why she was so endearing to us?

What she said was indeed the greatest compliment of all time.

She said "I have seen rich, poor, famous and celebrities -- but whenever you young couple walked into our department you two had a refined upbringing with such unpretentious demeanor." With that she took us into her wings and raised us in so many ways--yes, we were still in our twenties!"



(2013)





Palace of Fine Arts (2012)



Eucalyptus Knoll (2012)



Sausalito (2003)



Sausalito (2003)



(2017)



(2012)

The Tesoro family from the Phillipines would often visit San Francisco. **Maribel**, the daughter of Mrs. Tesoro, contacted Ruthie and visited her in Mill Valley whenever possible. They are such kind people and always cared about Ruthie's well being. Sadly, Mrs. Tesoro passed away many years ago. A Phillipine postage stamp was issued in honor of her 100th birthday.



The Millers from Dorking, England invited Ruthie and Joan to their beautiful home in the UK. They had a lovely time visiting with them and touring the area. The Millers also visited Ruthie at Gump's when in San Francisco.





Jeff & Bernadette Bohn corresponded with Ruthie for years. Every holiday season she would receive a photograph of the family. She was able to watch their son grow from a baby to an enlisted military soldier as an adult. The Bohn's visited Ruthie on several occasions and were even able to come to Sonoma and spend time at Joan and Peter's home. As luck would have it, they were in San Francisco and attended Ruthie's bench dedication at The Palace of Fine Arts. What a wonderful surprise for Ruthie!

Bob and Betty Grohman enjoyed living in Marin County just a few miles from Ruthie's condominium in Mill Valley. Customers at Gump's, they became friends and socialized on a regular basis. Bob was the first non-family member to be appointed as President & CEO of Levi Strauss & Co. In 1978, he referred Joan to the Human Resources Department at Levi's as she was interested in employment with the company. Joan was later hired in the Menswear Marketing Department and enjoyed the opportunities her employment provided for many years. (Photo 1976)



Traveling the World

It was Spring 1977 – time to visit Vienna for the first time since Ruthie moved to the U.S. in 1939. It was Joan's 25th birthday as well. Ruthie, Joan, Susan and a close friend of Ruthie's from Los Angeles- also named Ruth- travelled to Greece, Austria, Italy, Switzerland and France. This was a wonderful trip and also an emotional one for Ruthie. However, it turned out to be just one of many exciting adventures she enjoyed in the upcoming years. Ruthie and Joan were fortunate to take many trips to Europe together, creating countless fond memories to cherish. Following are just a few photographs of a sampling of the trips.

Ruthie's travel included trips with friends, both romantic and otherwise, tours or even ventures on her own. Europe, the Caribbean, Australia, Israel and Mexico were some of the places she chose. Through her employment at Gump's, Ruthie met people from around the world that she would also visit. She always had a yearning to see beautiful places, meet the world's peoples and enjoy old friends.



Kennedy Airport, NY (June 1983)



Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany (July 1983)



Villeneuve les
Avignon, France
(1983)



Venice, Italy
(1985)



Amboise, France
(1985)



London, England
(1985)



Interlaken with Marge (1976)



Ruth Hirsch, Ruthie, Joan and Susan
Paris (1977)



Ruth and Joan, Greece (1977)





Peter, Joan and Ruthie, Paris (1985)



Chateau de Chamonts
France (1985)



Positano, Italy
San Pietro Hotel and Positano Beach
(1992)





Opera House Praha (1994)



Budapest, Hungary (1994)



Dorking, England
(1990's)

And, of course Austria!

Vienna was the main hub of Ruthie's world in Austria while she lived there. She loved to walk along the Kaertnerstrasse pedestrian shopping street in the center of town and stop at the cafes and pastry shops such as Demel's to treat herself to a famous Viennese delicacy. Stadt Park was where a young Ruthie would dance to live orchestras playing waltzes and walk through the beautiful gardens admiring the historical statues. And there was always a stroll along the famous Danube River to admire the scenery. Although it is not possible to include photos of all the locations around the country, Ruthie toured all over Austria, often with Joan, as well.



Stadt Park (1983)



Danube(1992)



Statue of Mozart,
Stadt Park (1992)



Kaertnerstrasse (1983)

Ruthie's family lived in the 2nd District near The Prater and the Riesenrad or giant ferris wheel. She would often spend her time enjoying access to these facilities. Another place of interest is the Schloss Schonbrunn, a beautiful palace that is now open to the public. The Spanish Riding School, all the beautiful art and history museums, the Opera House and Musikverein or Golden Hall -- all places of interest to visit while in Vienna. And, Ruthie never forgot Grinzing and the Vienna Woods when wanting a short trip out of the city to enjoy the local food and wine served in a Heurigen, or traditional tavern.



Riesenrad (1992)



Schloss Schonbrunn (1992)



Innsbruck, Austria (1977)

While Ruthie no longer had family or old friends in Austria, she did have very special "new" friends. Dr. Andrea Kasamas and Franz Zadrazil, both accomplished artists in Vienna, their son, Valentin, and parents, Fred and Honey, were all introduced to Ruthie by Frank Back. They became good friends over the years and Ruthie would visit with the family whenever in Vienna. Sadly, over time, both parents, as well as Franz, passed away. However, Ruthie kept in touch with Andrea and Joan continues to communicate with her at this time. Recently Franz's paintings were placed at the most prestigious art museum in Vienna -- a very important tribute to him.



Franz, Ruthie and Andrea (Fall 1994)



Fred and Honey Kasamas
(July 1983)



Valentin is now an adult working for the Vienna Underground, something he wished for as a young boy. He is also continuing his education.



Andrea and Franz, both very talented and recognized artists took different approaches to their art. Franz's catalogs (left). Andrea's catalogs (right).

Ushie & Arnoff Baum were also lovely friends of Ruthie's and she would always visit while in Vienna (July 1983)



With the Baum's and their son (1977)



Our Special Relatives

With all the relocations and decades that have passed, it has been a challenge to keep in touch with our relatives. The upheaval of World War II as well as geographic separations have certainly limited our contact. Many have passed, while others have grown up, married and we simply have lost track of one another. However, thankfully, there are wonderful memories from times when we have been able to stay in touch.

Visits From Our Special Segal Cousins



The Segal Girls visiting Ruthie in Mill Valley (June 1997)

From Left: Sara (Jeannie's Daughter), Jeannie, Ruthie, Debbie, Terry, Joan

Although we missed having Jeannie join us, in September of 2004, we were all treated to another visit from our dear Segal cousins. The Segal patriarch, Hank, was Ruthie's cousin and also born in Vienna. He was the son of Jacque, the brother of Ruthie's mother, Seril. And Henry Turkel, the man that sponsored Ruthie and Martha to the U.S., was the son of Freida, Seril and Jacque's sister. There was a very deep bond between Ruthie and Hank. Ruthie was Hank's "babysitter" early in his life in Vienna. The resemblance was remarkable. They looked more like brother and sister than Ruthie and her siblings. Hank was a University Professor in Cleveland for many years. He and Shirley raised three well educated and talented daughters with warm and loving demeanors. After all the losses that had taken place in Austria, this family has brought so much joy to all of our lives and continue to do so. It is a true gift to have them as members of our family.



Hank Segal & Ruthie, Sonoma (September 2004)



Enjoying Sonoma (2004)





Hank and Shirley
San Francisco Bay (2004)

Debbie's 50th Birthday Dinner
Mill Valley (2004)





Malvina Korn was Ruthie's cousin on her mother's side of the family. Malvina was Henry's sister and Freida's daughter. Previously widowed, Malvina married Al Berry in the late 1960's. Her son from her first marriage, Barry, married Helene and began their family with the birth of Lisa in the 1970's. The last time Ruthie visited with Malvina and Barry was in 1995 at her home in Mill Valley. Malvina has since passed away.



Sheldon and Judy Godfrey are relatives on Ruthie's father's side of the family. They have jointly published books regarding the history of the Jewish people. Sheldon and Judy currently live in Toronto, Canada. Photographed at Chateau St Jean in Sonoma. (2007)



Cathy Rodriguez is the daughter of Sara, Al Geary's sister. Cathy and her husband, Mark, along with their children Jarrett and Jenna, visited Ruthie in 2002 from Illinois.



Tina Whyte, Peter's sister, moved to San Francisco from England in the 1980's. Tina planned to stay for one year but decided to stay on a permanent basis. Ruthie looked upon Tina as a daughter through the years. Tina married Paul Berensmeier in 2004 and has lived happily in a family home in Forest Knolls since that time. Tina has continued her nursing career as well. Always a pleasure to be with, Tina and Paul are a wonderfully happy and charming couple. Tina was with Ruthie the day she passed and comforted her during her final days prior to her departure.



Peter's daughter, Emma, and family visited Ruthie in August of 2016 from England while on a trip to California. Ruthie had known Emma and Mark from previous trips to the Bay Area, but had never met their daughters, Amelia and Francesca. They all had a lovely time swimming in the pool at Eucalyptus Knoll. The girls also sang a song to Ruthie with their beautiful and angelic voices.



Berensmeier & Whyte's Wedding
Congratulations Party (2004)

Peter's son, Paul Whyte, married his fiancée, Christine, in England in the Spring of 2004, just after Peter and Joan moved to Sonoma. They immediately flew to England to attend the wedding. A few months later, Peter's sister, Tina, was married to Paul Berensmeier in West Marin. Paul and Christine decided to visit Sonoma from England in June of the same year. Ruthie took the opportunity to host a Congratulations Party for both couples at Blue Oaks. Ruthie had met Paul Whyte previously, however, this was the only time she had the opportunity to meet Christine. They now have two lovely children, Eleanor and Thomas.



Sonoma

In the Spring of 2004, Peter and Joan purchased a home perched on an oak knoll overlooking the Sonoma Valley and affectionately named the property Blue Oaks. Ruthie was given her own bedroom in the home -- officially sign-posted as "Ruthie's Room" -- and loved visiting the countryside. For Ruthie, it was akin to visiting Austria's rural areas and she often referred to the view from the property as "Little Austria," The visits brought back memories of the times she and her family would visit Grinsing (the wine country outside of Vienna) as well as other locations that offered mineral baths and hot springs. Ruthie would walk from the house to the gate as a measure of her current strength and determination. She would then show a hitchhiker's thumb to Joan as she arrived in the car to pick up Ruthie and continue on down the hill to pursue whatever adventure they had planned for the day. When Ruthie entered the car she would sing a variety of songs, including "Oh What A Beautiful Morning," "Edelweiss" and a variety of other Austrian songs. Always smiling! Always sharing her joy for the upcoming day. Ruthie's Room in Sonoma continues to be filled with many of her prized possessions as well as her joy!



(2007)

Sonoma offers many opportunities to socialize, tour the beautiful wine country and celebrate the holidays and other special occasions. Or one could just choose to relax and enjoy the ambiance of a beautiful home and its location high on a hill overlooking the Sonoma Valley. Included in the following pages are examples of all of these.



Views from Peter & Joan's Sonoma Home



Ruthie enjoying "Little Austria." (2008)



Ruthie's Deck (2004)



Ruthie walking the road and hitchhiking a ride from Joan (2008)

Harvest time at Fallenleaf Vineyards was Ruthie's favorite!
Harry and Judy Cohn graciously hosted a harvest lunch each
year at the vineyards located in the George Ranch.



(2007)



(2007)



(2007)



(2007)



(1985)



{2009}

Background view of Kunde Vineyards in
Kenwood (below and right) (2009)



(2006)



{2006}



92nd Birthday (2009)

Many birthday celebrations were held in Sonoma for Ruthie!



95th Birthday (2012)



(2009)



97th Birthday (2014)



95th Birthday! (January 13, 2012)





97th Birthday
(2014)

Peter's 65th Birthday Party (2008)



Peter's 65th Birthday 2.26.2008





Ruthie's Orchids



Viansa with Boris (2003)



Berensmeier & Whyte's
Congratulations Party
(2004)



Easter (2015)



Easter (2008)





Mother's Day (2009)



Kenwood Inn & Spa (2007)



Joan's Birthday (May 12, 2012)



Thanksgiving (2011)

(2009)



Thanksgiving (2012)

Christmas Celebrations!



(2007)



(2006)



(2007)



(2009)



(2012)



Sonoma City Party (2011)



Kira (December 2014)



Pat & Patti's Garage (2012)



Patti (2013)



Kimberly Leeling (2008)



Beth, Kaboodle (2014)



(2008)



Lilly, Kaboodle (2008)



(2012)



(2008)



(2007)

Ruthie loved the classics!



(2009)



(2012)



(2010)



Christmas (2016)



Easter 2009





Ruthie, Mommy and Buster -- 2 Days Old (2005)

Palace of Fine Arts

Ruth's favorite location in San Francisco had always been the beautiful Palace of Fine Arts. It reminded her of a place she would visit in Europe. One day in March of 2011, Ruthie and Joan decided to visit the Palace and see the renovations that had been underway. Among other improvements, the benches had been renewed and dedicated to specific people. Joan had been quietly looking for locations for a bench she could dedicate to Ruthie and this was the perfect place. It was time to contact the Maybeck Foundation, the nonprofit in charge of restoring and maintaining the Palace of Fine Arts. At that point all the benches on the lagoon side had been allocated to specific donors, however, the Executive Director was impressed by Ruthie's story and offered to let her choose a new spot where her bench could be built. Of course, we were thrilled and immediately chose the location. It would take several months to build the bench and it was worth the wait.

On July 13, 2011, a bench dedication was held in Ruthie's honor. The specific date was chosen because it would have been her mother's 125th birthday. Ruthie emigrated to the United States leaving her parents behind in Austria never to see them again. This was such an honor for her to have a bench in her name in a location that honored so many influential citizens of San Francisco. She knew her name would live on at the Palace of Fine Arts long after she was gone. And, she thankfully had years to enjoy the spot with a special place in her heart. Joan always told Ruthie if there was any way to communicate once she leaves this world, Joan would be there to talk to her. So it is with so much warmth in her heart that this special place exists for Ruthie and the sense of belonging that it provided for her.



Ruthie & Joan chose the bench location on March 4, 2011. Sitting with Ruthie is Jan Berckefeldt, Executive Director of the Maybeck Foundation.





First, the concrete slab was laid where the bench would be installed. (June 2, 2011)



Happiness is having a bench at The Palace of Fine Arts overlooking the beautiful lagoon! It was Ruthie's wish to have the plaque dedicated to her family as well.



Next, the bench was installed. (June 8, 2011)





Palace of Fine Arts Bench Dedication - July 13, 2011



Ruthie always loved a party! Especially when she was the guest of honor!









Spending leisure time at the bench was a favorite activity for Ruthie. What could be better than admiring the Palace reflection on the lagoon as the swans and other wildlife swim and fly by!



(2013)



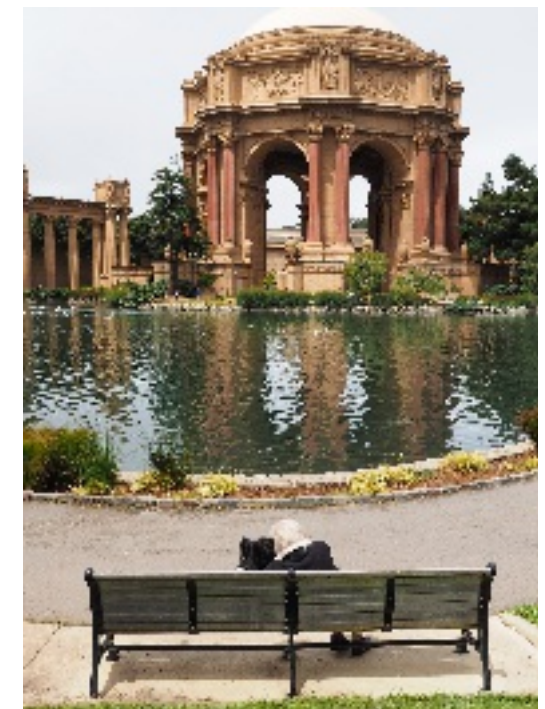
(2012)



(2012)



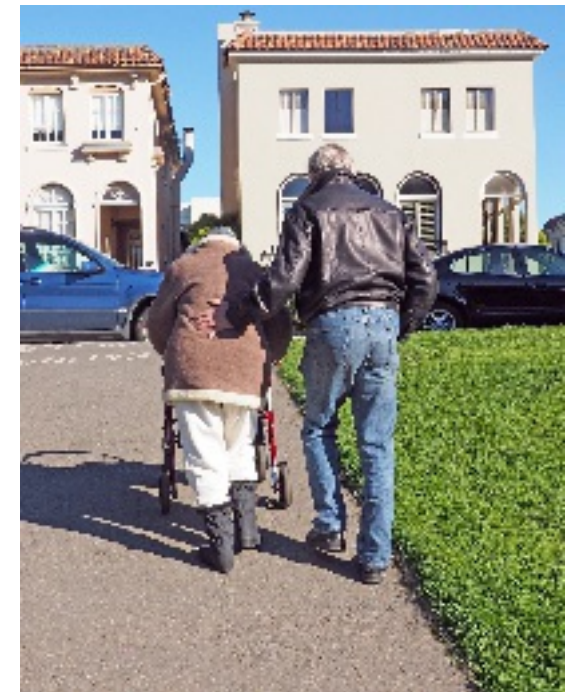
(2012)



(2014)



Donna Casella & Ruthie (August 2011)



(2015)



(2015)



(2012)

99 and Slowing Down --- Just a little!



Ruthie & Stella
Vecchiola



99th Birthday (January 13, 2016)



Eucalyptus Knoll with
Arthur (July 2016)



Ruthie, Peter and Joan took a ride in Thumper, the 1974 RV, to Sandy and Ted's East Bay home for Brunch and back to Mill Valley. (June 2016)



Erik Meghangi (above)
Buckeye Restaurant
(Thanksgiving 2016)

100th Birthday Celebration!

When it came time to plan Ruthie's 100th Birthday Celebration, Ruthie was adamant that she did not want a large party. And, she absolutely did not want a birthday cake. It was understood that when Ruthie had made up her mind about something there was no use in trying to change it. So a small open house with limited hors d'oeuvres and no cake was planned. Ruthie was so overwhelmed and pleased with her party! Near the end she actually fell asleep on the arm of Chuck Bratton as she was both content and exhausted from all the attention. It was an absolute success and a day that will always be remembered!





No cake -- cookies in the shape of "100"!

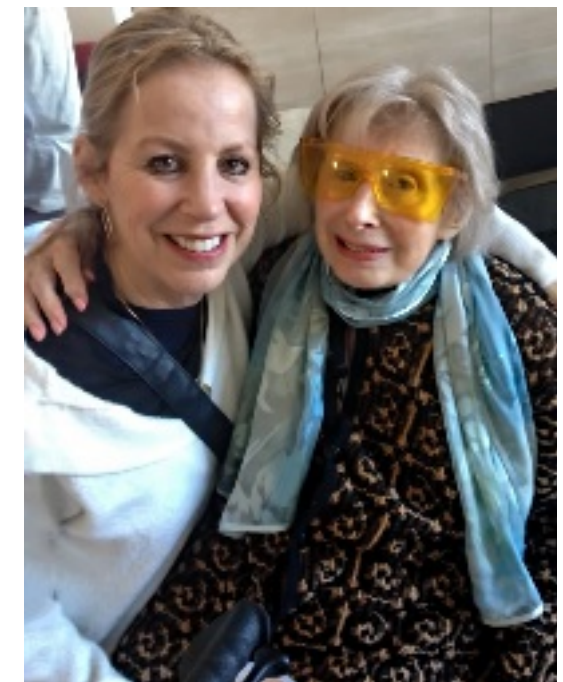


Handwritten card from Paul Price making reference to Ruthie's "Meine Königin" or "My Queen" status.



Everyone LOVED our Ruthie!!!!





Ruthie was very content and exhausted at the end of the day!

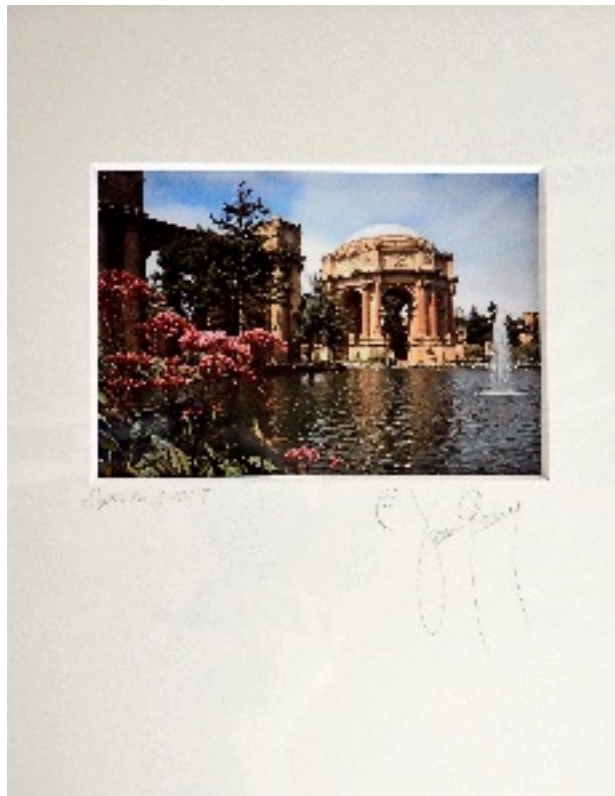
Ruthie's Determination Never Wavered

Ruthie was strong to the end – never giving up. Although she would say she felt it was her time to go, she would always fight to stay. 2017 was a challenging year. Ruthie was losing her vision from macular degeneration. She had hip replacement surgery after a fall, came down with pneumonia, followed by atrial fibrillation and when the hospital sent her back to the rehabilitation hospital where she fell, she had congestive heart failure. But **she fought** through such adversity and she eventually returned to her home where she felt more secure. Three months later, on Saturday, September 9th, Ruthie was diagnosed with cancer. Joan immediately brought her home from the hospital with full-time care on Sunday, September 10th.

Cousin Terry Segal was in town from Ohio and planning to visit Ruthie on Wednesday, September 13th. With the knowledge that Terry would be visiting, Ruthie gave no sign of letting go. She gave Joan instructions of exactly what food to buy for Terry's lunch as well as many other other details for the visit. Terry arrived and Ruthie lit up as she always did. They had a very special, close relationship for many years. Joan was planning to stay briefly so they could have a private visit and settle down from the shock of Ruthie's recent diagnosis. The doctor had advised Joan that Ruthie had weeks to months to live. To date, there was no sign of her slowing down.

It turned out Ruthie had her own plan. She was going to discuss hospice care with Terry. Ruthie was ready for that phase of care to be implemented. Terry had professional experience working with hospice. The next day, Ruthie was placed under hospice care at her request. Ruthie was determined and no one would be able to alter her plan. Within just five days Ruthie passed peacefully. She had made up her mind it was time. The hospice nurses were surprised as they felt she had more time with us.

The highlight of Ruthie's last day was when Cousin Jeannie called from Boston and sang "*Over the Rainbow*" to Ruthie. Jeannie's beautiful voice emanated from the phone and Ruthie lip-sinked along. From that time, "*Over the Rainbow*" has been adopted in Ruthie's memory. Joan also shared special photos of Ruthie's family and other special friends, such as Frank and Kurt with Ruthie, as well as a very poignant letter she wrote to her. It touched both their hearts and Ruthie smiled acknowledging as the items were shared. Ruthie had several visitors on and off throughout the day. She was fully cognizant. She understood everything that was shared and discussed. What Joan and the nurses didn't understand, was how close to the transition Ruthie was. Ruthie had made up her mind. To everyone's surprise she passed peacefully that evening, September 18th, at 11:15 pm. Ruthie had decided and knew then that it WAS her time to go.



To My Beautiful Mother - September 9, 2017

You are the best mom + best friend anyone could ever hope for. I am so fortunate that you have been with me to share your love, your strength & your insight & experiences with me.

I will always be at the bench waiting to communicate with you. I know you will be there as well.

I love you more than anyone, or anything in the world, & always have. You are the best... mine. Love Joan

On September 9th, 2017, Ruthie's doctor called Joan from the hospital to advise her Ruthie was not well. Ruthie had been admitted for observation and sadly, the doctors discovered she had cancer that had spread. Joan created this card and drove from Sonoma to the hospital in Marin to break the news to her in person. It was one of the most difficult things Joan had ever undertaken in her life. By that time Ruthie was tired. She had been through a lot during the last eight months and it was almost a relief to her. Joan made arrangements to take her home the next day and hired a caregiver, Elisabeth, that Ruthie knew well and adored.

Cousin Terry Segal & Ruthie (2001)



Forever Young

What a zest for life! On one hand Ruthie could be demanding. On the other hand she was soft, loving beautiful and always trying to make the best of a bad situation.

Ruthie was always beautiful. People were in awe. At 100 years she did not have a line on her face. When a doctor would enter the hospital room he/she often walked out and rechecked the patient name against the chart, as they did not believe her age.

Ruthie and Joan shared a very special mother and daughter relationship as well as that of best friends. Whenever in need, the other was there to support and care for her. Through good times and bad, sickness and health, exploring all types of activities together including fine art, music, dining, shopping, and so on. Their bond was ever-present. From the time she was a young girl Ruthie called Joan her shadow, as she would not easily let Ruthie out of her sight.

Joan was so fortunate to be a recipient of Ruthie's total dedication and love. She shared it with Joan with all her heart and soul. Joan will never forget her kindness and dedication and will always keep her in the deepest part of her heart.

Hugging Ruthie was like holding soft velvet in your arms. She was gentle, soft and warm, And, so **very** loving. Joan misses this more than anything.

Ruthie's presence is often felt in many ways and will continue to be recognized and acknowledged. When a person shared as much love and determination as Ruthie, she will always be a part of her loved ones lives. Whenever you spot a *rainbow* or a *bluebird*, know that Ruthie is there looking over you.

Ruthie rests in peace at the Mt. Tamalpais Cemetery in San Rafael, California. A small gathering of friends attended a ceremony on September 21, 2017 to pay their respect and bid farewell to this wonderful and unique human being. Following the service, a group of attendees gathered for a luncheon in Ruthie's honor at Half Day Cafe -- one of Ruthie's favorite spots to enjoy lunch.



Guest Book and Photo
Half Day Cafe

A Celebration of Ruthie!

Please Join Us to Celebrate
The Life of Ruth Geary



Date: Friday, July 13, 2018

Time: 11:00am-1:00pm

Location: Palace of Fine Arts
Ruthie's Bench located
on the lagoon walkway

RSVP: jgeary@earthlink.net by
Thursday, July 5th

Because of the emotional pain of our loss, Joan waited until July 13, 2018 to hold a celebration in Ruthie's honor at her bench at the Palace of Fine Arts. This date was chosen as it was Ruthie's mother's birthday. As she would have wanted, it was a celebratory event, friends drinking champagne and enjoying food, while remembering this beautiful woman who meant so much to all of us.









Ruth Geary
January 13, 1917 - September 18, 2017

Ruth lived her life with Strength, Beauty and Determination. She was born in Vienna during WWI, fled Austria in 1939 and confronted WWII in her new home, America. Ruth adapted throughout her life by facing each day with a joy and strength that most would never know. The 20+ years Ruth was employed at Gump's were some of her happiest. This period also included many of her travels to countries around the world as well as a dynamic social life.



Ruth often began her day singing
"Oh What A Beautiful Morning,
Oh What A Beautiful Day,
I've got that Wonderful Feeling,
Everything's Gonna Be My Way
La La"



"Somewhere Over The Rainbow"

Someday I'll walk upon a rainbow
Take up where the clouds are far behind me.
When trouble makes me downy drops,
High above the chimney tops,
That's where you'll find me.
Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high
And the dream that you dare to
Wish, oh why can't it be

Celebration Brochure (above)
Obituary San Francisco Chronicle (below)

IN MEMORIAM

Ruth Geary

January 13, 1917 - September 18, 2017

"Somewhere Over The Rainbow"

Ruth Geary lived her life with Strength, Beauty & Determination. Ruth was born in Vienna during World War I, fled Austria in 1939 & confronted World War II in her new home, America. In 1940, Ruth married Albert A. Geary & later had two daughters. Ruth adapted throughout her life by facing each day with a joy & strength that most would never know. While Ruth

bore the pains of her losses from the war in private, she always shined a positive light upon others. The 20+ years Ruth was employed at Gump's were some of her happiest. This period also included many of her travels to countries around the world as well as a dynamic social life. A bench at The Palace of Fine Arts was dedicated to Ruth in 2011. Ruth will always be remembered as a kind, intelligent & elegant woman, believ-



ing that life, as she was, is beautiful. Ruth passed away

peacefully on September 18, 2017 at 100 years young.

One Year Later

A year following Ruthie's passing, a monument in her honor was placed at her grave site. Made of beautiful white-honed marble and engraved with style and elegance, Ruthie would have been pleased with this memorial. As Ruthie stood out in a crowd, this tribute does as well. What Ruthie did not realize when she chose the location of her resting place, is that Rhea and Julian Toole, as well as her friend, Rose Goldman, are all buried just a few feet away.



May Peace Always Be With Our Beautiful Ruthie...

102nd Birthday
(January 13, 2019)





"Somewhere Over The Rainbow"

